

Improvement Cost Reduction:

Improvements to the properties such as a new fence, landscaping, tree removal, and grass restoration can be used as a 'payment' in addition to mowing and snow removal. Participants must submit an Improvement Plan. The cost of improvements must be agreed upon prior to improvements being started.

Payment for Work/Improvements: The City will not pay or reimburse for anyone's work or improvements. Purchaser's contributions will be considered 'sweat equity' and will be subtracted from the selling price/current market value of the property.

The amount subtracted will be based on receipts and photographs of any improvements and logs kept by the buyer for mowing/snow removal.

Time to complete work: No longer than 24 months.

What is the value of each vacant lot? The value of each parcel will vary based on size and comparable sales in the area. The value will be the market value of each property as determined by City Staff, the Winnebago County Supervisor of Assessments or a professional appraiser, and approved by the City Council.

- After the purchase price of the vacant lot has been earned or paid in accordance with the MOU and in an amount sufficient to satisfy the fair market value purchase price, City staff will prepare the necessary document(s) and transfer the vacant lot.
- The City will send a letter annually to those property owners who live adjacent to available City vacant lots.
- The City reserves the right to accept or reject any and all applications. All applicant personal information is confidential.
- Only lots listed for sale are eligible. Applications for lots not listed will be returned. The City has the right to exclude properties from the program.

Where do I get an application for the Mow or Improve to Own program?

- Pick up an application at City Hall—425 East State Street, 2nd Floor, Rockford, IL 61104.
- Call 779-348-7418 and request an application. We will mail it to you!



Mow or Improve to Own— City Owned Vacant Lot Program

425 East State Street
Rockford, IL 61104
779-348-7162
888-394-7293 (fax)
www.rockfordil.gov

Why institute a Mow or Improve to Own Vacant Lots Program?

The City of Rockford owns vacant residential lots. As we continue our efforts to demolish deteriorated housing more vacant and abandoned residential properties, there may be an increase in the number of city owned vacant lots. Vacant lots can decrease property values and be detrimental to neighborhoods. To support neighborhoods and decrease the City's maintenance burden we are offering a proactive approach to obtaining quality owners for certain city residential lots.

The Mow or Improve to Own program has been designed to help adjacent property owners and eligible non-profits acquire certain city vacant lots and improve neighborhoods. Buyers commit to maintaining the lot and improving such as with landscaping, fencing, tree removal, grass restoration. The cost of maintenance, at a specified rate of actual cost to improve is subtracted from the purchase price.

Eligible Applicants

1. Owner occupied adjacent home owners are those whose property shares a property line with an undeveloped City owned parcel of land.
2. Non-Profit community organizations and stakeholders include 501(c)(3) organizations which will utilize and maintain the land for the benefit of the neighborhood or adjacent 501 (c)(3) organizations.

Eligibility Requirements

1. An application must be completed and accepted by City Council.
2. Within the last 5 years, there can be no buyer delinquent taxes in Winnebago County; no history of property maintenance, nuisance, building and zoning code violations; and no delinquent City utility accounts.
3. Non-profit organizations must have 501 (c)(3) status at the time of application and maintain such throughout the term of the agreement that will be signed between the buyer and the City.

General Information/Requirements

- Adjacent land owners must own and occupy their residence to be given preference as a buyer.
- If vacant land is wanted by both adjacent land owners, the property can be split.
- Buyers must sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the City which will include a Hold Harmless Clause.
- At a minimum, the buyer will be responsible for basic maintenance. This includes mowing and trimming the lot once every two weeks, raking leaves, shoveling snow, and picking up trash.

Vacant Lot Cost Reduction:

- **General Maintenance**

Maintenance	Dollar amount	Maximum per Year
Lawn Mowing	\$25 per cut	\$375
Leaf Removal	\$25 per removal	\$75
Snow Removal	\$25 per removal on front sidewalk	

- Value of identified and approved improvements.
- The cost of a lot will be reduced by 1/2 if the proposed buyer can demonstrate that they have been maintaining the lot the year prior to their application.